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ABSTRACT

An overview of developments in educational planning from the 1960s through the 1990s is presented in this paper. Based on the definition of educational planning as "a technique for choosing resources and objectives in accordance with a standard," successful planning requires realistic objectives, effective means, and compatibility between objectives and means. The first section describes educational planning in the 1960s, which focused on accelerating educational development, the school, and quantitative measures. The next section concludes that despite questions raised by cultural upheavals of the 1960s, planners in the 1970s continued to use a government-focused approach. During the 1980s, a world economic crisis changed the concept of educational planning in developing countries; a shift in emphasis took place from developing a work force to an "intellectual force" and from government to private-sector support. In the 1990s, the future of educational planning depends on each nation's context; each nation should modify its outlook by developing scenarios; understanding the link to social and economic contexts; and designing pragmatic and operational plans. Six conditions for improving the feasibility of educational planning are outlined and include the following: (1) methods should be consistent with objectives; (2) training should be extended to all who are involved in the planning process; and (3) evaluation should be based on regularly collected data. Information on the International Institute for Educational Planning's (IIEP) purpose and members is included. (LMI)

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IIEP Contributions, No. 2

Educational planning: reflecting on the past and its prospects for the future

by

Jacques Hallak

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Educational planning: reflecting on the past and its prospects for the future

by Jacques Hallak

One practical way of thinking about developments in educational planning is to use the definition given by Ahumada in 1972: namely that educational planning is "a technique for choosing resources and objectives in accordance with a standard. Technically speaking, planning is a series of action-oriented procedures: it is neutral - it is neither ethically good or ethically bad."[1] But it can be effective or ineffectual, and yet attain the desired goals. For planning to work, three conditions must be met:

a) objectives must be realistic, i.e. feasible;
b) the ways and means used to attain these goals are adequate, or at least the most effective; and,
c) the objectives and the means of attaining them must be compatible.

This approach to planning constitutes, in my opinion, a firm basis for discussing the role of educational planning over the last decades and its prospects for the future.

The sixties: educational planning's golden years

In the sixties, the international community, particularly developing countries, under the conviction that human capital was important to economic development, had to speed up the development of education. Denison and others showed that the enrolment effort, the number of graduates, as well as financing research and development, had become variables which could contribute towards growth in the same way as capital reserves, equipment, and manpower resources. To secure educational growth, qualified personnel, appropriate methods, and planning institutions (offices, administrations, and secretariats) with genuine decision-making power were needed.

In all regions of many countries, the introduction of educational planning activities was seen as an essential to the work done by education departments. Educational planning bureaux were set up, specialists were trained, and reports and documents prepared on plans, laws, and decrees. In some countries, such plans served as a frame of reference for the government's work in developing education. In the light of national experiences, many plans included statistical forecasts on enrolment levels, teachers, schools, classrooms, costs, and financing. Generally, with a few rare exceptions, it can be said that many plans were not actually implemented taking both forecastings and final achievements into account. Not much attention was paid to educational quality, out-of-school education, the ability of the modern production sector to absorb graduates, or the flexibility of the public sector in terms of financing the development of education. Planning was essentially school-oriented, quantitative, a public activity aimed at development. Its main concern was to meet objectives of realism and efficiency whilst complying to certain standards.

1. Jorge Ahumada (1972). *La planificación del desarrollo*, Santiago de Chile, Ediciones Nueva Universidad. Referred to in *Prospects*, Unesco, N° 70, Vol. XIX, N° 2, 1989, page 195.

The doubts of the seventies

Late in the sixties, the huge expansion of education began to create serious social, cultural, economic, and political problems. Some observers interpreted the 1968 upheaval as the expression of this imbalance. Planners were eager to increase the coverage of educational planning. The concept of "integrality" seemed to many officials ideal for meeting the challenge raised by the growth of the education systems in many countries. Nonetheless, the persistence of a fairly favourable educational financing situation, the concentration of government control in the formal sector, and agreement between policy-makers and public opinion to aim at expanding enrolments at the various educational levels, all meant that planners did not change their approach: they kept focusing on figures from the government sector.

The deceptions of the eighties

The world economic crisis, which began in the industrialised countries before spreading to other countries, brought a change in the way educational planning was conceived in developing nations.

Due to government budget restrictions, other sources of educational financing were sought. The economic recession cast doubt on the ability of economies to absorb graduates. Both factors had an impact on the notion of planning. The major challenge facing planners was not so much how to manage the development of the system but rather how to find ways of avoiding an irreversible deterioration of school conditions; in other words: how to plan a stable system? Methods prevailing in educational planning at the time did not allow for the management of stable systems; neither could they be applied to defining priorities for the reallocation of resources in order to improve quality and at the same time remain consistent as regards increasing enrolments for the various educational levels and types.

With the rise in under-employment and youth unemployment, further accentuated by economic recession, enthusiasm and expectations of the effects of education on the economy have dwindled. There has been a shift from the notion of a "work force" to the idea of an "intellectual force" to explain the fundamental conditions behind modern economic growth. This no longer involves the planning of human resources but rather intellectual resources geared to creation, innovation, enterprise and the management of society. Adapting training programmes to the specific requirements of available jobs - which was the subject of an on-going debate for twenty to thirty years - has turned out to be an unreal objective. This has somewhat disappointed those who were looking for rapid and practical solutions.

The virtues of the private sector as a source of financing as well as the advantages of private educational administration and organisation were taken into account by an increasing number of developed and developing countries alike. This was part of a growing tendency in governments and universities to voice doubts about the theory of the "welfare state", the ability of governments to efficiently and fairly manage the social sector (including education), and the usefulness of planning. Indeed, some countries experienced a budget reduction. Through a shortage of funds for investment purposes, their educational planning divisions were steadily marginalised and ended up loosing their credibility and merely preparing background reports of which no use could be made. If planning equates with having an impact on real-life situations, plans such as these are largely worthless.

Doubts about the role of the State also affected planning criteria. In practice, educational planning was seen as a mechanism for bureaucratic and political control rather than as a strategic tool. This possibly allowed politicians to rationalize and legitimize decisions, to secure or

strengthen public support, thereby justifying strategies and actions aimed at consolidating political standpoints. These factors determined the type and sources of information used so that educational plans could be geared to them. The main focus of interest was on themes which were in keeping with the political goals of the governments in power but not necessarily with the country's most pressing problems.

In addition, the well-known limitations and short-comings of the ideas and methods behind traditional educational planning have had far greater bearing as the image of the planner has declined. It is especially hard to control the time factor in the planning process and the lack of relations between planning and educational administration.

The time factor: The pace of educational processes takes them beyond the time and scope of planning. The time scale needed to assess the effects of an educational reform exceeds the amount of time allowed allocated to the authorities in charge of such reform and the implementation of the plan. On average, it takes thirteen years of schooling and six of higher education to train top-level specialists. Even more time is needed for these new types of professionals - generated by the reform - to prove themselves. This cannot be understood, and much less evaluated, by politicians, therefore how can it be by the plan which is a set of procedures and institutions relatively stable in administrative terms? The pace at which the education system works is generally slower than that of plan preparation which, in its turn, extends beyond the term of office of many governments.

Difficult dialogue with the administration

Much planning work was denied credibility because it was never implemented. This was particularly due to the fact that the administrative dimension which often hinders application is not taken into account. Generally there is: i) a lack of dialogue and understanding amongst politicians, planners, and administrators; ii) marginalisation of administrative officers in the preparation of the plan; iii) short-lived stability and fleeting continuity in decision-making and little interest for monitoring implementation; iv) lack of staff motivation; and v) in some countries, little consistency between goals and the institutional ability to implement the planned actions and programmes.

The promises of the nineties

The future of educational planning will depend on the situation of each country. In poor countries and those with a limited administrative capacity, educational administration, and the educational planning offices, tend to be very centralised. Furthermore, such offices are responsible for monitoring and managing the budget and investment made in education. If initiatives are to be taken at any level of the administrative system, it would be in the form of regional directives made by an inspector or a school principal. Moreover, this type of planning would be undertaken in a "mechanical" linear fashion and would probably support traditional administration. Some of the wealthier countries already have a hybrid administrative system in which decision-making and control take place at the centre whereas implementation power is decentralised. In such countries, educational plans should be much more complex and include: a) a long-term, prospective outlook used to detect "promising areas" as well as "signs of weakness" so that decisions can be altered in time. This is a must in order to cope with the different durations of educational, political, and planning processes; b) the need to keep plans flexible so that government action can be adapted according to the reactions of those working in

education. Specialists agree that this involves capitalising the experience of some companies in the production sector, well-known for the calibre of their strategic planning and the lasting positive results derived therefrom, to encourage further renewal within the education system - in other words, this implies introducing a strategic element into educational planning; c) the need to include short-term concerns so as to avoid creating a cleavage between educational planners and administrators. Most countries have a planning system of varying degrees of complexity and sophistication, depending on local conditions. The best plan is not necessarily one which appears to be the most rigorous and precise, using sophisticated scientific instruments and yet impossible to implement. Only those plans actually carried out and which help to improve decision-making can be said to be effective - and to be effective, they must be realistic. Nonetheless, during the coming decade, educational planning should modify its outlook in the following three ways:

a) Outlooks: the importance of scenarios

To illustrate the need for new outlooks, we shall take three examples:

- Changes in population. In the nineties, a fundamental transition will occur. There will be a drop in both fertility and mortality rates. This will greatly affect the growth rate of the school-age population and consequently the pressure for expansion of the education system. In addition, faster urbanisation, as seen in the last few decades will extend into the nineties. Educational needs of urban populations will be particularly pressing. Educational planners will have to consider these long-term trends and plan educational services accordingly, particularly in the field of non-formal education as well as education and training for the so-called traditional sector of the economy.

- The progress of science and technology, which appears to be reaching an ever-increasing number of people throughout the world. The challenges facing politicians are both enormous and universal. How can traditional education systems be altered in order to give more importance to science training at all levels? Where do we start? Some specialists consider that the focus should be on higher education, while others think priority should be given to science training in secondary school. All this can consolidate the quality of tertiary education and at the same time produce a fall in the quality of primary education. Obviously, new scenarios are needed to shed more light on the importance of the various decisions and alternatives.

- Clearly, cultural traditions are decisive and planners cannot afford to overlook them. It is extremely difficult to define pivotal factors affecting change which are universally applicable in this area. However, educational planning should at least take into account such things as human rights, the language of instruction, the major languages used for international communication, the effect of the mass media on the everyday lives of an increasing number of people, and perhaps such issues as the changing role played by ideologies which, one way or another influence planners' thinking.

Given the need to take into account that any change in the system will have long-term implications, developing scenarios for the future, should be an extremely important step in preparing medium-term plans.

b) Strategic spirit: the importance of control

In order to make educational plans more flexible, an even more thorough knowledge of the work and reactions of those involved to decisions made by education officials is required. This implies a shift to more quality and less quantity, a plan which concentrates on people actively involved rather than on defining theoretical, abstract models. This approach can be less comprehensive and global, and plans can thus be more detailed on certain levels and types of education. A few examples help illustrate this:

- let us suppose that the government adopts a new entrance examination for grade X. What effect will this have on the curriculum, teaching, teacher behaviour, and the number of pupils wishing to enrol?;

- if the government decided to change the way in which teachers were paid - for instance by introducing a system linking pay to results, how would the unions react? To what extent could better salaries help to upgrade teacher qualifications? Would teacher absenteeism drop?, and so forth;

- how can legal, administrative, and pedagogical cooperation between the State and private sectors be stimulated?

All these examples suggest that planners have an important task: namely, to concentrate on a thorough diagnosis of the system and its links with the social and economic context. This would necessitate a detailed analysis of existing implicit and explicit incentives, such as the advantages of modifying these incentives, of the ways in which pupil flows are controlled in parts of the system, and finally the attitudes of both the "users" and "producers" of education. In our opinion, if planning involves choosing the most effective and realistic methods, these relationships should be known. The lack of efficiency in conventional plans is possibly caused by a poor knowledge of the "behavioural attitudes" of the actors involved in the system. The role of educational research should not be underestimated. Without exaggerating, it may be said that the success of planning will hinge primarily on its ability to integrate the results of educational research in the preparation of plans.

c) The quest for realism: being pragmatic and operational

Over the coming decade, the survival of educational planning will depend on its ability to design concepts and standards which are both pragmatic and operational. In other words, the plan should give far greater consideration to such things as:

- the actual conditions as well as the educational, social, cultural, financial, and human factors which influence educational systems and determine their future development; this could be a means of testing the feasibility of projects and programmes included in the plan;

- educational administration, particularly through a better connection between the plan and annual budgets as well as resource-allocation decisions; this could be called analysis of medium-term objectives and goals;

In other words, six conditions should be met in order to improve the feasibility of educational plans:

a) those responsible should be associated with reflexion on the objectives and plan-implementation conditions. This would make data more accurate and ensure proper deliberation on human, material, and financial resources. It would also guarantee enough time to employ those responsible for implementing the plan. The resulting plan might not be as wide-ranging, covering the entire education sector, but would put greater emphasis one particular sub-sector (pre-school, basic, secondary, technical and vocational, teacher training, tertiary, etc.);

b) making methods consistent with objectives. Here a balance must be sought between the mobilizing force of the objectives and the disheartenment caused by over-ambitious and unrealistic plans. One way of solving the problem would be to identify intermediate, short-term targets and mobilise resources to attain them;

c) motivation of people. This is very hard to achieve. It involves status, working conditions, and wages. Nevertheless, any administration lacking motivation cannot work properly for either the education sector's administrative routines or the implementation of plans. I feel that priority should go to strengthening existing administrative structures. This might involve a series of practical decisions which should be included in the education plan itself (personnel policy, information, standards of behaviour, and so on);

d) an improvement in the official communication of the plan's objectives and the role of each institution and person concerned with implementing them. Unfortunately, due to a lack of communication, planning seems to be artificial, alien to people's or society's interests, whereas the future of education should be of the utmost public importance;

e) training of those involved in the planning process. This does not only concern those working in the planning division; it is also a question of training all administrative staff at central, regional, and local levels in fields which are more closely connected to their work;

f) the routine processes of assessment as a means of monitoring and managing plans. Evaluation should be based on data collected regularly concerning the conditions of implementation and specific studies which would allow objectives to be revised in the light of lessons learnt during the implementation of plans.

Conclusion

These very general indications are given merely by way of illustration. Naturally, it is up to each country to seek and follow its own course. Having said that, it is to hoped that educational planning in the nineties will be:

- more forward-looking and visionary: this implies preparing scenarios to assist policy-makers;

- less standard-oriented and more strategic: this means a closer relationship between planning divisions and educational research and experimentation centres;

- not so removed from reality, more pragmatic and operational: for many countries, this will imply well defined sub-sectorial educational plans, in an effort to programme operations, plan resources and requirements, as well as the conditions for implementation.

To my mind, in many under-developed countries, plans must aim to meet the challenge of "education for all". They should include adult-education programmes and endeavour to improve the quality and coverage of primary education. In other countries, planners should perhaps concentrate on using of technology to extend the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system (distance teaching for instance). Others will need to devote their attention to higher education and teacher training above all else. But two topics will be of particular interest in the coming years: i) non-formal education, necessary for the development of new planning methods; and ii) the education of marginal groups (the poorest 20%) which all countries - even the wealthy nations - should include in their programmes. To study both topics, more research and experimentation are needed so that educational plans meet the requirements defined in the introduction to this paper.

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IIEP Contribution No. 2

Educational planning was originally conceived as a technique for choosing resources and objectives in accordance with a standard and consisted of a series of action-oriented procedures. In order to be effective, planning needed realistic goals and the institutional capacity to implement these goals; it also had to ensure that both the objectives and the means of attaining them were compatible.

The conception and practice of educational planning have changed significantly over the past three decades. Reflecting on these changes and their different contexts, the author reviews some of the problems which have arisen and discusses how educational planning might modify its outlook during the coming decade in order to take a more forward-looking and strategic direction, become less standard-oriented and thus able to confront the problems posed by reality.

The author

Jacques Hallak (France) has been Director of the International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO) since October 1988. He is author or co-author of numerous books and articles on educational costs and finance, human resource development, planning the location of schools, and policies for educational change and development. His latest publication, *Investing in the Future: Setting Educational Priorities in the Developing World*, was published jointly by IIEP/UNESCO and Pergamon Press in 1990.

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